

rights of their citizens are observed, and I know that leaders like Mr. Crafts in Huntingdon take that responsibility seriously.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, I thank Mr. Crafts for his leadership and service to Huntingdon Borough and congratulate him on being appointed to this commission.

HONORING TECHNICAL SERGEANT PATRICIA SALAZAR

HON. DEBRA A. HAALAND

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Ms. HAALAND. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Technical Sergeant Patricia Salazar, who retired from the New Mexico Air National Guard on December 2, 2018 as a Master Sergeant after 25 years of distinguished service. Throughout her accomplished career, Technical Sergeant Salazar played many valuable roles in defense of our state and our nation. A native of Santa Fe, New Mexico, Technical Sergeant Salazar graduated from St. Michael's High School in 1980. She received an athletic scholarship from the College of Santa Fe and graduated in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology. She went on to receive a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice Administration from California State University, Long Beach in 1986. After completing her graduate degree, Technical Sergeant Salazar returned to her home state and attended New Mexico State Police Training Academy. She then enlisted in the United States Air Force and completed her training in 1993.

Technical Sergeant Salazar began her tenure with the New Mexico Air National Guard's 150th Security Forces Squadron at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, she helped develop and initiate emergency evacuation plans for senior Pentagon leadership. In 2003, she transitioned to the New Mexico Army National Guard's 1209th Medical Detachment. From 2009 to 2011, Technical Sergeant Salazar was stationed in Kosovo and supervised a team of field medics during deployment and field operations. In 2012, she returned to Kirtland to serve with the New Mexico Air National Guard's 150th Special Operations Wing.

My predecessor, Representative Lujan Grisham, had the pleasure of meeting Technical Sergeant Salazar in 2017 when she worked with the Air Force to ensure that her father, Staff Sergeant Joe Salazar, received the medals he earned while serving our nation in World War II. He served with the 497th Bombardment Group of the Army Air Forces from 1942 to 1945, earning several honors including a Bronze Star. Mr. Salazar was also a role model for his daughter when she enlisted and during her service overseas.

Madam Speaker, I want to salute Technical Sergeant Patricia Salazar for her 25 years of service to New Mexico and the United States. It is hard-working, service-minded individuals like her who continue to make our state and our nation so great. I wish her the best of luck.

INTRODUCTION OF THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR TRANS- ATLANTIC ENGAGEMENT (LITE) ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Mr. HASTINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Leadership Institute for Transatlantic Engagement (LITE) Act—a bill that will create an institute to assist in strengthening ties with our allies, protect democratic institutions, and support inclusive and visionary leadership on both sides of the Atlantic.

In my capacity as Chair and in the leadership of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, for over a decade, I have led hearings and other initiatives on international election observation, good governance, and democratic backsliding as part of our continued commitment to the underlying principles of the Helsinki Final Act adopted by the 57 North American, European, and Eurasian countries that make up the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Last Congress these activities included a hearing series entitled, "Human Rights at Home", hosting young OSCE parliamentarians in the U.S. Congress to discuss how we can strengthen their political inclusion to advance peace and security efforts, and commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Transatlantic Minority Political Leadership Conference and Transatlantic Inclusion Leaders Network that have been pivotal in strengthening inclusive and strategic international relations over the past decade.

These activities have identified numerous challenges in western leadership and countries—including my own—that are putting our democracies and the transatlantic partnership at risk. For instance, a 2020 Pew Research study found that in 11 of the 57 countries that make up the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), approximately half of those surveyed are dissatisfied with the way democracy in their countries is functioning with high rates of dissatisfaction in Italy, Greece, and the United States. Internal domestic challenges including economic decline, the rise of antiestablishment political parties, the weakening of the rule of law, increased migration, and heightened security concerns are only some of the sources of dissatisfaction. Continuing racial and other disparities in wealth, health, employment, education, justice, and other sectors have also led citizens and others to question whether democracy delivers.

To renew confidence in the shared values that underpin Western democracies and the transatlantic partnership, we need to bolster initiatives that restore faith in democratic institutions. This includes identifying and strengthening the roles leaders can play in ensuring laws are equitable, transparent, and enforced; elections are free and fair; and that rights and protections are equally extended to all in their constituencies. And our efforts must include those that have long been excluded from fully participating in our society.

As such, the LITE Act establishes an institute to assist Western countries in living up to

democratic ideals and restoring faith in democracy, by equipping transatlantic policymakers with legislative, communications, conflict resolution and other leadership tools to strengthen democratic institutions in their societies and the transatlantic relationship. Given demographic change on both sides of the Atlantic, LITE will cultivate inclusive and intergenerational solutions to current challenges with the goal of empowering diverse individuals across generations with the knowledge, tools, opportunity, and access to fully participate in their democracies. In addition, LITE will support strategies that reunify communities by assisting leaders in building resilience against the exploitation of community grievances that can lead to dangerous divisions in our societies.

The LITE Act therefore complements and provides an essential tool for executing President Biden's Executive Orders on racial equity and addressing discrimination and plans to re-engage with our European allies and hold a Democracy Summit.

I hope you will join me in supporting LITE to strengthen our democratic future and the transatlantic partnership.

HONORING MELANIE RHINEHART VAN TASSELL

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my Chief of Staff, Melanie Rhinehart Van Tassell, for a decade of service to me and to the people of California's Fifth Congressional District.

Born in Santa Cruz and raised in Antioch, Melanie attended high school and college in the East Bay, graduating in 1996 with dual degrees in Political Science and Business from the University of California, Berkeley. She went to work in the litigation consulting industry until 2001, when she left to earn a Master's in Business Administration at New York University's Stern School of Business. Upon graduation, she moved to Washington, D.C. to use her intellect for public service.

Melanie began her career on Capitol Hill as a part-time intern in Congress before being hired as a legislative assistant to Congressman Earl Pomeroy in March of 2004. In just three short years, she took over as his legislative director, overseeing the congressman's policy agenda. After the 2010 midterm elections, I hired her to manage my legislative team at the strong recommendation of Congressman Pomeroy. Within months, she was promoted to Chief of Staff, becoming possibly the kindest, most genuine person to ever serve in such a position.

In my office, Melanie has proven herself to be an effective, charismatic leader and a skilled political operative. Handling issues of the utmost importance to our district, she has taken on a portfolio that spans natural disasters to the Wine Caucus. All the while, she has used her unbelievably positive, infectious personality to make everyone she interacts with feel special.

Despite the long hours involved with leading a congressional office, Melanie carves out quality time to spend with her husband Steven